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NOAA's Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary teams with Surfrider Foundation for Water Quality Testing at Maui Beaches

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary is partnering with the Maui Chapter of Surfrider Foundation to conduct water quality testing along Maui beaches.

Surfrider Foundation supplied the sanctuary with water quality testing equipment, including an incubator used to measure bacteria levels from water samples. The sanctuary conducts the testing with the help of volunteers from its Citizen Scientist program. Volunteers from this program assist sanctuary staff in hands-on field-based scientific investigations and long term monitoring programs.

The volunteers, including local students, participate in water quality testing at five sites along the coasts of Maui. Water samples are collected weekly and tests are performed at the sanctuary's headquarters in Kihei. Tests resulting in high bacteria levels are reported to Maui County's Department of Health.

"Water quality in our near shore marine environment is a concern for many Maui county residents," stated Allen Tom, Pacific Islands Regional Director for the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. "The partnership between Surfrider Foundation and the sanctuary is an example of how the community can be directly engaged in helping to make a difference. By collecting data and understanding complex issues of water quality, we form a more educated cadre of Hawaii residents."

The Surfrider Foundation is a non-profit grassroots organization dedicated to the protection and enjoyment of our world's oceans, waves and beaches. "We are no less concerned about our nearshore waters today, here on Maui, than the founders of Surfrider were back in California, in 1984," said Tim Lara, Chair for the Maui Chapter of Surfrider Foundation. "We believe partnerships like the one we have with the Sanctuary are key."

The sanctuary is administered jointly by a partnership of NOAA's Office of National Marine Sanctuaries and the State of Hawai'i Department of Land and Natural Resources. Up to 12,000 humpbacks visit Hawaiian waters each winter from November to May. The sanctuary works to protect humpback whales through research, education, conservation and stewardship.

NOAA's mission is to understand and predict changes in the Earth's environment, from the depths of the ocean to the surface of the sun, and to conserve and manage our coastal and marine resources. Visit us at <http://www.noaa.gov> or on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/usnoaa>.

On the Web:

Hawaiian Islands Humpback Whale National Marine Sanctuary:

<http://hawaiihumpbackwhale.noaa.gov>

Surfrider Foundation, Maui Chapter

<http://www.surfrider.org/maui/>

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